

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
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AMEMBASSY LUSAKA
AMEMBASSY MAPUTO
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA
AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L PRETORIA 4478

E.O. 11652: XGDS-3
TAGS: PDEV, WA
SUBJ: NAMIBIA: AN ASSESSMENT OF ADMINISTRATOR GENERAL STEYN

1. SUMMARY: ADMINISTRATOR GENERAL STEYN HAS SOME QUALITIES WHICH WILL FAVOR GOOD COLLABORATION WITH AHTISARRI AND OTHERS WHICH COULD COMPLICATE THE RELATIONSHIP. STEYN IS PROUD OF WHAT HE HAS ACCCOMPLISHED AND WILL STRONGLY RESIST UNDOING TO ANY MAJOR DEGREE PROCESSES WHICH HE HAS SET IN MOTION SUCH AS THE REGISTRATION OF VOTERS. STEYN ENJOYS BEING IN CHARGE AND WILL WANT TO REMAIN SO. DEALING WITH HIM WILL REQUIRE SENSITIVE TACT AND FIRMNESS.
END SUMMARY.

2. PROBABLY THE MOST IMPORTANT PREREQUISITE FOR SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WESTERN SETTLEMENT PLAN IN NAMIBIA IS THE
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DEVELOPMENT OF AN EFFECTIVE COOPERATIVE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE UNSR AND ADMINISTRATOR GENERAL STEYN. THE DYNAMIC OF THEIR PERSONAL AND WORKING RELATIONSHIP WILL, IN TURN, BE THE PRODUCT OF THE PERSONALITY, PHILOSOPHY, AND WORKING STYLE OF THE TWO MEN AND THE PRESSURES ON THEM.

3. THE FOLLOWING ASSESSMENT OF STEYN IS TENTATIVE AND BASED ON

OBSERVING HIM IN ACTION AS AG SINCE DECEMBER LAST YEAR, THE VIEWS OF SOME MEMBERS OF HIS STAFF AND OTHERS WHO HAVE MET HIM, AND IMPRESSIONS GAINED BY THE POLITICAL COUNSELOR WHEN HE ACCOMPANIED AMBASSADOR MCHENRY AT A MEETING WITH STEYN ON APRIL 4 (CAPE TOWN 0696).

4. STEYN HAS SOME QUALITIES WHICH WILL FAVOR GOOD COLLABORATION WITH AHTISAARI AND OTHERS WHICH COULD COMPLICATE THE RELATIONSHIP. THE JUDGE, WHOSE FATHER WAS A UNITED PARTY LEADER, SEES HIMSELF AS A LIBERAL AND BROAD-MINDED SOUTH AFRICAN. HE LIKES TO BELIEVE, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT THE NATIONAL PARTY LEADERS IN SOUTH WEST AFRICA HARBOR AS MUCH ANIMOSITY TOWARD HIM AS DOES SWAPO, AND THIS MAY BE CLOSE TO THE TRUTH. HE VIEWS HIMSELF AS MOTIVATED BY CHRISTIAN IDEALS AND A RUGBY PLAYER'S COMMITMENT TO GOOD SPORTSMANSHIP. PART OF HIS SELF-IMAGE IS, OF COURSE, THAT OF A LYAL SOUTH AFRICAN, BUT HE DOES NOT APPEAR TO CONCEIVE OF HIMSELF IN HIS PRESENT POSITION AS SIMPLY AN INSTRUMENT OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT. ACCORDING TO SOME OBSERVERS, OVER THE PAST YEAR HE HAS COME TO CONSIDER HIS ROLE AS THAT OF A BENEVOLENT ARBITER WHO WOULD BRING PEACE AND DEMOCRACY TO A BENIGHTED TERRITORY. SOME SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS HAVE COMPLAINED IN PRIVATE THAT STEYN THINKS OF HIMSELF AS "THE KING OF THE SOUTHWEST."

5. THE AMIABLE AND GREGARIOUS JUDGE IS ALSO STRONG-WILLED, OFTEN POLITICALLY NAIVE AND UNWORLDLY, RATHER VAIN, AND SENSITIVE TO CONFIDENTIAL

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CRITICISM. WHILE NO DOUBT GENERALLY RESPONSIVE TO ORDERS FROM PRETORIA, HE IS SOMETIMES INCLINED TO TAKE THE INITIATIVE AND TO SPEAK HIS MIND. STEYN'S SELF-IMAGE AS AN INDEPENDENT, HIGHLY-PRINCIPLED INDIVIDUAL COULD HAVE USEFUL IMPLICATIONS FOR THE TRANSITION PROCESS. IT CONCEIVABLY COULD LEAD HIM TO SIDE WITH AHTISAARI IN SOME DECISIONS NOT FAVORED BY SOUTH AFRICA. ON THE OTHER HAND, IT COULD LEAD HIM TO BE MORE OBSTINATE IN ASSERTING HIS PREROGATIVES VIS-A-VIS THE FINN.

6. WHEN HE TOOK ON HIS RESPONSIBILITIES AS ADMINISTRATOR GENERAL, STEYN WAS A COMPLETE STRANGER TO NAMIBIA AND UNTRIED IN THE TASKS CONFRONTING HIM. HE IS CONFIDENT AND PROUD ABOUT WHAT HE HAS ACCOMPLISHED. THIS OUTLOOK WILL COME INTO PLAY WHEN THE AHISSARI-STEYN RELATIONSHIP IS TESTED BY THE QUESTION OF WHAT TO DO ABOUT THE CURRENT REGISTRATION OF VOTERS' CAMPAING. (AUTHORITIES IN WINDHOEK ASSERTED THIS PAST WEEKEND THAT OVER 70 PERCENT OF THE REPORTED POTENTIAL ELECTORATE OF 440,000 HAD BEEN REGISTERED TO DATE AND THAT THE REGISTRATION PROCESS WILL CONTINUE UNTIL SEPTEMBER 22.) RECENT DISCUSSIONS WITH JOHN VIAL, THE AG'S STAFF ASSISTANT, INDICATE THAT STEYN, WHILE WILLING TO ENTERTAIN SOME CHANGES (E.G., LIBERALIZING THE REGULATIONS TO EXPAND THE ELECTORATE), WILL STRONGLY RESIST SCRAPPING OR UNDOING

TO ANY MAJOR DEGREE WHAT HAS BEEN DONE IN THE REGISTRATION OF VOTERS.

7. THOUGH HE PERCEIVES HIMSELF AS AN ARBITER, THE AG WAS DEEPLY AFFECTED BY THE MURDER OF KAPUWO AND -- PROBABLY UNCONSCIOUSLY-- HAS AS A CONSEQUENCE DRIFTED FROM RELATIVE IMPARTIALITY TO A DEGREE WHICH MAKES HIM APPEAR AN OPEN ADVERSARY OF SWAPO. AND IN DEALING WITH SWAPO, HE HAS AUTOMATICALLY APPLIED HIS OWN VERSION OF THE TRADITIONAL SIMPLE DEVICE ASSOCIATED WITH AFRIKANNER RULE IN SOUTH AFRICA: ABRUPT, SUMMARY, FREQUENTLY SWEEPING ARREST AND INDEFINITE CONFINEMENT WITHOUT TRIAL. WHEN, IN THE TRANSITION PERIOD, THE ALMOST INEVITABLE INCIDENTS OF VIOLENCE OCCUR, IT WILL LIKELY BE DIFFICULT TO PERSUADE THE JUDGE THAT THERE ARE WISER WAYS OF HANDLING SUCH CHALLENGES.

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8. THE PROSPECTS SEEM FAIRLY GOOD THAT STEYN WILL SEE THAT HIS HISTORIC FUNCTION NOW IS TO MAKE THE SETTLEMENT PLAN WORK AND THAT THIS MEANS ESTABLISHING A COOPERATIVE RELATIONSHIP WITH AHTISSARI. PRESS REPORTS FROM WINDHOEK QUOTE HIM AS SAYING ON AUGUST 2 THAT "IT IS ONLY IF THE TWO OF US ESTABLISH AN INTIMATE PERSONAL CONTACT OF TRUST AND COOPERATION THAT THIS OPERATION WILL SUCCEED." IT IS NOT WITHOUT SIGNIFICANCE THAT PRIME MINISTER VORSTER STRESSED THIS SAME POINT IN HIS TV INTERVIEW AUGUST 1 (PRETORIA 4431).

9. WE CAN EXPECT, HOWEVER, THAT STEYN, WHILE MANIFESTING GOODWILL, SINCERITY AND REASONABLENESS, WILL FROM THE BEGINNING NATURALLY ATTEMPT TO ESTABLISH A RELATIVELY NARROW SCOPE FOR AHTISAARI'S AUTHORITY. STEYN ENJOYS BEING IN CHARGE AND HE WILL WANT TO REMAIN SO; AND IN THIS HE HAS STRONG PUBLIC BACKING FROM VORSTER (PRETORIA 4431 AND 4451).

10. DEALING WITH STEYN WILL REQUIRE SENSITIVE TACT AND FIRMNESS, ACCEPTANCE OF HIS GOOD INTENTIONS, APPEALS TO HIS PRIDE AND SENSE OF FAIRNESS, AND CARE IN LEAVING OPEN OR CREATING FACE-SAVING AVENUES TO COMPROMISE OR RETREAT.

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